U.S. Department of Labor

Bureau of Labor Statistics
2 Massachusetts Ave. N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20212

May 7, 2018

Katharine G. Abraham
CRIW Summer Institute Fellowship Program
kabraham@umd.edu

Dear Katharine:

With this letter, I nominate Bob Martin, research economist in the Division of Price and Index Number Research (DPINR), Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), for a CRIW Summer Institute (SI) Fellowship. Bob is an early-career researcher, having been hired into DPINR just over a year ago. Since joining BLS, Bob has completed the requirements for his Ph.D., graduated from Michigan State University, expanded his dissertation research to study the robustness of conditional logit for binary panel data models with highly persistent outcomes, and began work on a project of major significance to BLS. The focus of this latter work is to study the potential bias in the Consumer Price Index stemming from the implicit treatment of consumer units as homogeneous both in expenditure patterns and prices faced. A related issue is the theoretical assumption of homothetic preferences which posits that the rate at which a consumer is willing to trade one good for another is independent of income level. A goal of this study is to determine that, if present, neglected heterogeneity in preferences, expenditures, and prices may invalidate BLS price indexes. Bob has been using AC Nielsen HomeScan data for this project.

Over the short time period that Bob has been with DPINR, I have depended upon him heavily as our resident econometrician and as an individual who is willing to tackle various problems that arise with regard to price index number and economic well-being measurement. He shares his knowledge and experience with his DPINR and OPLC colleagues, upper management, and the research community at large. One example is when Bob served as a conduit for progress to be made in addressing another consumer price index measurement issue, being examined with the HomeScan data, where the research had stalled. As I have interacted with and observed Bob this past year, I have seen him develop as a leader—and as someone who is most likely to make important contributions to the field of economic measurement. I would like to see him continue to develop as a researcher and leader willing to tackle the complex issues faced by the CRIW community. Bob being awarded a CRIW-SI Fellowship would be a highlight of his early professional career, and from which he, we at BLS, and CRIW will benefit.

Following this letter are Bob's Statement of Interest and CV.

If you need additional information from me, please contact me at (202) 691-6567 or garner.thesia@bls.gov. I hope that you will agree with me, Bob's participation in the CRIW Summer Institute, as a Fellow, would add greatly to his development and to the success of the Summer Institute sessions.

Sincerely,

Thesia I. Garner, Ph.D.
Acting Chief, Division of Price and Index Number Research
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U.S. Department of Labor
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Robert Martin

CRIW Summer Institute Fellowship - Statement of Interest

As a recent PhD graduate and an early-career researcher in the field of economic measurement, I believe the CRIW Summer Institute presents a valuable professional development opportunity. Currently I work in the Division of Price and Index Number Research at the Bureau of Labor Statistics. My current projects support the Bureau's mission of cost of living measurement and include studying the impact of new product varieties and accounting for consumer heterogeneity. As an econometrician, I have a great appreciation for the benefits of and challenges related to producing high-quality statistics. At the same time, I am still relatively new to the field. I started at the BLS in early 2017 at the same time I was finishing my dissertation. While I have spent the last year building a foundation in topics like price index theory, I would still benefit greatly from the depth of exposure to measurement issues that the CRIW SI will provide. For instance, there are several sessions that deal with price and cost of living measurement, including one from Hottman and Monarch that is directly related to my current research. Furthermore, other presentations touch issues like the changing nature of the U.S. economy and alternative data sources, which is quite relevant to ongoing efforts at the BLS. I am excited about the opportunity to meet and collaborate with leaders in the field. Thank you for considering my application.

Robert S. Martin

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Education

PhD in Economics, Michigan State University, 2017

MA in Economics, Michigan State University, 2013

BS in Economics, *Summa cum laude*, The George Washington University, 2008

Fields of Interest

Econometrics, Price indexes, Labor, Industrial Organization

Publications

Estimation of average marginal effects in multiplicative unobserved effects panel models, *Economics Letters* 160, pp. 16-19, November 2017

Works in Progress

Exponential panel models with coefficient heterogeneity

Investigating bias in panel binary response estimators when unobservables are serially correlated

The robustness of conditional logit for binary panel data models with highly persistent outcomes (with D. Kwak and J.M. Wooldridge)

Presentations

What does consumer heterogeneity mean for measuring the cost of living?
Federal Council on Statistical Methods Conference, Washington, DC, Mar. 2018

Exponential panel models with coefficient heterogeneity
Midwest Economics Association Annual Meeting, Evanston, IL, Mar. 2018
Midwest Econometrics Group Annual Meeting, Champaign, IL, Oct. 2016
Econometrics Seminar, Michigan State University, Mar. 24, 2016

Investigating bias in panel binary response estimators when unobservables are serially correlated

Midwest Economic Association Annual Meeting, Evanston, IL, Apr. 2016.

Red Cedar Conference, East Lansing, MI, Apr. 2015.

Graduate Student Seminar, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, Feb. 2015.

Professional Experience

Bureau of Labor Statistics, Research Economist	2017-present
IHS Global Insight, Economist	2009-12
IHS Global Insight, Technical Data Specialist	2008-09

Teaching Experience

Instructor:

Intermediate Microeconomics, Michigan State University	2016
Introduction to Microeconomics, Michigan State University	2015
Intermediate Microeconomics (Online), Michigan State University	2014

Teaching Assistant:

Introduction to Econometrics, Michigan State University	2015, 2016
Introduction to Microeconomics, Michigan State University	2014, 2015
Quantitative Methods II, Master of Public Policy Program, Michigan State University	2013
Comparative Economic Systems, Michigan State University	2013
Introduction to Macroeconomics, Michigan State University	2012, 2013

Awards and Honors

Graduate School Dissertation Completion Fellowship, Michigan State University (for Spring 2017)	2016
David Kelly Scholar, Michigan State University	2012
Presidential Scholar, The George Washington University	2004-08
National Merit Scholar	2004

Professional Memberships

American Economic Association, American Statistical Association, Econometric Society, Midwest Economics Association